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The Marriage of CANA. 4

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SERMON

PREACHED AT
BLACK-HEATH,

In the YEAR MDCCXXXIX.

BY
GEORGE WHITEFIELD, A. B. late of
Pembroke College, OXFORD.



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JOHN ii. II.

This Beginning of Miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his Glory; and his Disciples believed on him.

I Have more than once had Occasion to observe, that the chief End St. *John* had in View, when he wrote his Gospel, was to prove the Divinity of Jesus Christ, (that Word, who not only was from everlasting with God, but also was really God blessed for evermore) against those Arch-Hereticks *Ebion* and *Corinthus*, whose damnable and pernicious Principles too many follow in these last Days. For this Purpose you may take Notice, that he is more particular than any other Evangelist, in relating our Lord's divine Discourses, as also his glorious Miracles which he wrought, not by a Power derived from another, like *Moses* and other Prophets, but from a Power inherent in himself, as he was really and essentially God. The Words of the Text have a Reference

ference to a notable Miracle which Jesus Christ performed, and thereby gave Proof of his eternal Power and Godhead. *This Beginning of Miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and shewed forth his Glory; and his Disciples believed on him.*

The Miracle here spoken of is that of our Lord's turning Water into Wine at a Marriage-Feast. I design at present (by God's Help) to make some Observations on the Circumstances and Certainty of the Miracle, and then conclude with some practical Instructions, that you, by hearing how Jesus Christ has shewed forth his Glory, may, by the Operation of God's Spirit upon your Hearts, with the Disciples mentioned in the Text, be brought to believe on him.

First, then, I would make some Observations on the Miracle itself.

Verse 1. and 2. *And the third Day there was a Marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the Mother of Jesus was there. And both Jesus was called, and his Disciples, to the Marriage.* By our Lord's being at a Feast we may learn, that feasting upon solemn Occasions is not absolutely unlawful; but then we must be exceeding careful at such Seasons, that the Occasion be solemn, and that we go not for the Sake of Eating and Drinking, but to edify one another in Love.

Feast.

Feasting upon other Accounts, and in any other Manner, I think absolutely unlawful for the Followers of Jesus Christ, because, if we eat and drink out of any other View, it cannot be to the Glory of God. The Son of Man, we know, came eating and drinking. If a *Pharisee* asked him to come to his House, our Lord went, and sat down with him ; but then we find his Discourse was always such as tended to the Use of edifying. We may then, no doubt, go and do likeways ; but for Persons that call themselves Christians, especially Ministers of Christ, to go at certain Festivals, (as I know is the Custom even of some religious Societies, and their Lecturers) only to eat and drink, and after that rise up to play, is so far from being a Christian Duty, that I am persuaded it is as *real* (if not so great) *Idolatry*, as the Children of *Israel* were guilty of when they did so, and danced round the golden Calf.

We may observe further, that if our Lord was present at the Marriage-Feast, then, to deny Marriage to any Order of Men, is certainly a Doctrine of Devils. No, *Marriage*, says the Apostle, *is honourable in all*. Our Lord graced the Marriage-Feast with his first publick Miracle. It was an Institution of God himself, even in *Paradise*, and therefore, no doubt, law-
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ful for all Christians, even for those who are made perfect in Holiness thro' the Faith Jesus Christ. But then we may learn the Reason why we have so many unhappy Marriages in the World; it is because the Parties concerned do not call Jesus Christ by Prayer, nor ask the Advice of his true Disciples, when they are about to marry. No, Christ and Religion are the last Things that are consulted; and no Wonder then, if Matches of the Devil's making (as all such are, which are contracted only on account of outward Beauty, or for filthy Lucre's Sake) prove most miserable, and grievous to be born.

And I cannot but dwell a little on this Particular, because I am persuaded the Devil cannot lay a greater Snare for young Christians, than to tempt them unequally to yoke themselves with Unbelievers, as are all who are not born again of God. This was the Snare wherein the Sons of God were entangled before the Flood, and one great Cause why God brought that Flood upon the World. For what says *Moses*, *Genesis* vi. 2, 3. *The Sons of God, that is, the Posterity of pious Seth, saw the Daughters of Men, that is, of the Posterity of wicked Cain, that they were fair, not that they were pious, and they took them Wives of all which they chose, not which God chose for them.* And

And what follows? *And the Lord said, My Spirit shall not always strive with Man, for that he also is Flesh*, that is, even the few righteous Souls being now grown carnal by their ungodly Marriages, the whole World was altogether become abominable, and had made themselves Vessels of Wrath fitted for Destruction. I might instance further, the Care the ancient Patriarchs took to chuse Wives for their Children out of their own religious Families, and how it was one great Mark of *Esau's* Rebellion against his Father, that he took unto himself Wives of the Daughters of the *Canaanites*, who were Strangers to the Covenant of Promise made unto his Fathers; but I forbear, Time will not permit me to enlarge here; let it suffice to advise all, whenever they enter into a Marriage-State, to imitate the People of *Cana in Galilee*, to call Christ to the Marriage. He certainly will hear, and chuse for you, and you will always find his Choice to be the best; he then will direct you to such Yoke-Fellows as shall be Helps meet for you in the great Work of your Salvation, and then he will also enable you to serve him without Distraction, and cause you to walk, as *Zachary* and *Elisabeth*, in all his Commandments and Ordinances blameless.

But

But to proceed, who these Persons were that called our Lord and his Disciples to the Marriage, is not certain. Some (because it is said that the Mother of Jesus was there) have supposed that they were related to the blessed Virgin, and that therefore our Lord and his Disciples were invited on her Account. However that be, it should seem they were not very rich, (for what had rich Folks to do with a despised Jesus of *Nazareth*, and his mean Followers?) because we find they were unfurnished with a sufficient Quantity of Wine for a large Company, and therefore, *when they wanted Wine*, Verse 3. *the Mother of Jesus*, having, as it should seem by her applying to him so readily on this Occasion, even in his private Life, seen some Instances of his miraculous Power, *saith unto him, They have no Wine*. She thought it sufficient only to inform him of the Wants of the Host, knowing that he was as ready to give as she to ask. In this Light the blessed Virgin's Request appears to us at the first View; but if we examine our Lord's Answer, we shall have Reason to think there was something which was not right; for Jesus saith unto her, Verse 4. *Woman, what have I to do with thee?* Observe, he calls her Woman, not Mother, to shew her, that tho' she was his Mother, as he was
 Man,

Man, yet she was his Creature, as he was God. *What have I to do with thee?* Think you that I must work Miracles at your Bidding? For some have thought that the holy Virgin spoke as tho' she had an Authority over him, which was a proud Motion; and our Lord therefore checks her for it. And if Jesus Christ would not turn a little Water into Wine, whilst he was here on Earth, at her Command, How idolatrous is that Church, and how justly do we separate from her, which prescribes Forms, wherein the Virgin is desired to command her Son to have Compassion on us!

But, notwithstanding the holy Virgin was blameable in this Respect, yet she hath herein led Rich and Poor an Example, which it is your Duty to follow. You that are rich, and live in ceiled Houses, learn of her to go into the Cottages of the Poor. Your Lord was not above it, And why should you? And when you do visit them, like the Virgin-Mother, examine their Wants; and when you see they have no Wine, and are ready to perish with Hunger, shut not up your Bowels of Compassion, but bless the Lord for putting it into your Power to administer to their Necessities. Believe me, such Visits would do you good; you would learn then to be

thankful that God has given you Bread enough, and to spare. And I am persuaded, every Mite that you bestow in feeding the Hungry, and cloathing the naked Disciples of Jesus Christ, will afford you more Satisfaction at the Hour of Death, and in the Day of Judgment, than all the Thousands squandred away in Balls and Assemblies, and such like Entertainments of the Devil.

You that are poor in this World's Goods, and thereby are disabled from helping, yet you may learn from the Virgin to pray for one another. She could not turn the Water into Wine, but she could intreat her Son to do it, and so may you, and doubt not, the Lord's hearing you; for God has chosen the Poor in this World rich in Faith; and, by your fervent Prayers, you may draw down many a Blessing on your poor Fellow-Creatures Heads. Oh, that I may be ever remembred by you before the Throne of our dear Lord Jesus! But what shall we say, Will our Lord intirely disregard this Motion of his Mother? No, tho' he check her with, *Woman, what have I to do with thee?* Yet he intimates, that he would do as she desired by and by. *Mine Hour*, says he, *is not yet come*; as tho' he had said, The Wine is almost, but not quite out; when they are come to an Extremity,

tremity, and sensible of the Want of my Assistance, then will I shew forth my Glory, that they may behold it, and believe on Me.

Thus, Sirs, hath our Lord been frequently pleased to deal with me, and, I doubt not, with many of you also. Often, often, when I have found his Presence as it were hid from my Soul, and his Comforts well nigh gone, I have went unto him, complaining that I had no Wine, no Visitation and Token of his Love, as usual. Sometimes he has seemed to turn a deaf Ear to my Request, and, as it were, said, *What have I to do with thee?* which has made me go sorrowing all the Day-long; so foolish was I, and faithless before him; for I have always found he loved me notwithstanding, as he did *Lazarus*, tho' he stayed two Days after he heard he was sick; but when my Hour of Extremity has been come, and my Will broke; then hath he lifted up the Light of his blessed Countenance afresh; he hath shewed forth his Glory, and made me ashamed for disbelieving him, who turned my Water into Wine! Be not then discouraged if the Lord does not immediately seem to regard the Voice of your Prayer, when you cry unto him. The holy Virgin we find was not; no, she was convinced his Time was the best

best Time, and therefore, Verse 5. *saith unto the Servants, (oh that we could follow her Advice!) whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.*

And now behold the Hour is come, when the eternal Son of God will shew forth his Glory. The Circumstance of the Miracle is very remarkable, Verse 6. *And there were set six Water-Pots of Water, after the Manner of the Purifying of the Jews, containing two or three Firkins a-piece.* The Manner of this Purifying we have an Account of in the other Evangelists, especially St. Mark, who informs us, that the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their Hands oft, eat not; and when they come from the Market, except they wash, they eat not. This was a superstitious Custom; but, however, we may learn from it, whenever we come in from conversing with those that are without, to purify our Hearts by self-Examination and Prayer; for it is hard to go thro' the World, and to be kept unspotted from it.

Observe further, Verse 7. *Jesus saith unto them, not to his own Disciples, but unto the Servants of the House, who were Strangers to the holy Jesus, and whom the Virgin had before charged to do whatsoever he said unto them; to these Jesus saith, Fill the Water-Pots with Water. And they filled*

filled them to the Brim. And he saith unto them, Verse 8. Draw out now, and bear to the Governor of the Feast; and they bare it. How our Lord turned the Water into Wine we are not told. What have we to do with that? Why should we desire to be wise above what is written? It is sufficient, for the Manifestation of his glorious Godhead, that we are assured he did do it; for we are told, Verse 9, 10. When the Ruler of the Feast had tasted the Water that was made Wine, and knew not whence it was, (but the Servants that drew the Water knew) the Governor of the Feast called the Bridegroom, and said unto him, Every Man at the Beginning doth set forth good Wine, and when they have well drunk, that which is worse; but thou hast kept the good Wine until now.

To explain this Passage, you must observe, it was the Custom of the Jews, nay, even the Heathens themselves, (to the Shame of our Christian baptized Heathens be it spoken) at their publick Feasts, to chuse a Governor, who was to oversee and regulate the Behaviour of the Guests, and to take Care that all Things were carried on with Decency and Order: To this Person then did the Servants bear the Wine: And we may judge how rich it was by his Commendation of it; *every Man at the Beginning, &c.* And judge ye, then, whether

ther Jesus did not shew forth his Glory, and whether you have not good Reason, like the Disciples here mentioned, to believe on him.

Thus, my Brethren, I have endeavoured to make some Observations on the Miracle itself; but, alas! this is only the outward Court thereof, the Vail is yet before our Eyes; turn *that* aside, and we shall see such hidden Mysteries couched under it, as will make our Hearts to dance for Joy, and fill our Mouths with Praise for evermore.

But here I cannot help remarking what a sad Inference one of our Masters of *Israel*, in a printed Sermon, has lately drawn from this Commendation of the Bridegroom. His Words are these. 'Our blessed Saviour came eating and drinking, was present at Weddings, and other Entertainments, (tho' I hear of his being only at one) nay, at one of them (which I suppose is that of which I am now discoursing) worked a Miracle to make Wine, when, it is plain, there had been more drank than was absolutely necessary for the Support of Nature, and consequently something had been indulged to Pleasure and Chearfulness. *'

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* See Dr. Trap, in his Sermon against being righteous over-much, Page 17.

I am sorry such Words should come from the Mouth and Pen of a dignified Clergyman of the Church of *England*. Alas, how is she fallen! or, at least, in what Danger must her tottering Ark be, when such unhallowed Hands are stretched out to support it! Well may I bear patiently to be stiled a Blasphemer, and Setter forth of strange Doctrines, when my dear Lord Jesus is thus traduced; and when those who pretend to preach in his Name, urge his Example to patronize Licentiousness and Excess. It is true, (as I observed at the Beginning of this Discourse) ‘our blessed Saviour did come eating and drinking; he was present at a Wedding, and other Entertainments; nay, at one of them worked a Miracle to make Wine; (you see I have been making some Observations on it) but then it is not plain there had been more Wine drank than was absolutely necessary for the Support of Nature; much less does it appear, that something had been indulged to Pleasure and Chearfulness.’

The Governor does indeed say, *When Men have well drunken*, but it no where appears that *they were the Men*. It is to be supposed, that the most holy and unspotted Lamb of God, who was manifested to destroy the Works of the Devil, and who,
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When at a *Pharisee's* House, took Notice of even the Gestures of those with whom he sat at Meat; Is it to be supposed, I say, that our dear Redeemer, whose constant Practice it was to tell People they must deny themselves, and take up their Crosses daily; who bid his Disciples take heed lest at any Time their Hearts might be overcharged with Surfeiting and Drunkenness? Can it be supposed, that such a Self-denying Jesus should now turn six large Water-Pots of Water into the richest Wine, to encourage Excess and Drunkenness in Persons, who, according to this Writer, has indulged to Pleasure and Chearfulness *already*? Had our Lord sat by, and seen them indulge, without telling them of it, would it not be a Sin? But to insinuate, he not only did this, but also turned so much Water into Wine, to increase that Indulgence, this is making Christ a Minister of Sin indeed. What is this but using him like the *Pharisees* of old, who called him a Glutton, and a Wine-Bibber? Alas, how may we expect our dear Lord's Enemies will treat him, when he is thus wounded in the House of his seeming Friends! Sirs, if you follow such Doctrine as this, you will not be *righteous*, but I am persuaded you will be *wicked over-much*.

But

But God forbid you should think our Lord behaved so much unlike himself in this Matter; no, he had nobler Ends in View, when he wrought this Miracle. One the Evangelist mentions, in the Words of the Text, *namely, to shew forth his Glory*, or to give a Proof of his eternal Power and Godhead.

Here seems to be an Allusion to the Appearance of God in the Tabernacle, which this same Evangelist takes Notice of in his first Chapter, where he says, *The Word, that is, Jesus Christ, was made Flesh, and dwelt*, or, (as it is rendred in the Margin) *tabernacled amongst us*. Our dear Lord, tho' very God of very God, and also most perfect and glorious in himself as Man, was pleased to throw a Veil of Flesh over this his great Glory, when he came to make his Soul an Offering for Sin; and that the World might know and believe in him, as the Saviour of all Men, he performed many Miracles, and this in particular; for thus speaks the Evangelist, *This first, &c.*

This then was the chief Design of our Lord's turning the Water into Wine; but there are more which our Lord may be supposed to have had in View, some of which I shall proceed to mention.

Secondly, then, he might do this to reward the Host for calling him and his Disciples

sciples to the Marriage. Jesus Christ will not be behind-hand with those that receive him, or his Followers, *for his Name's Sake*. Those who thus honour him, he will honour. A Cup of cold Water given in the Name of a Disciple, shall in noways lose its Reward; he will turn Water into Wine. Tho' those who abound in Alms-Deeds, out of a true *Faith in, and Love for Jesus*, may seem, as it were, *to throw their Bread upon the Waters*, yet they shall find it again after many Days; for they that give to the Poor, out of this Principle, *lend unto the Lord*, and look, *whatsoever they lay out, it shall be repaid them again*. Even in this Life, God often orders good Measure, pressed down and running over, to be returned into his Servants Bosoms. It is the same in Spirituals; to him that hath, and improves what he hath, for the Sake of Christ and his Disciples, *shall be given, and he shall have Abundance*. Brethren, I would not boast; but, to my Master's Honour and free Grace be it spoken, I can prove this true by happy Experience. When I have considered that I am a Child, and cannot speak, and I have seen so many of you come out into the Wilderiness to be fed, I have often said within myself, *What can I do with my little Stock of Grace and Knowledge among so great a Multitude?*

But,

But, at my Lord's Command, I have given you to eat of such spiritual Food as I had, and, before I have done speaking, have had my Soul richly fed with the Bread which cometh down from Heaven. Thus shall it be done to all such who are willing to spend, and be spent for Christ or his Disciples; for there is no respect of Persons with God.

Thirdly, Our Lord's turning the Water, which was poured out so plentifully, into Wine, is a Sign of a plentiful pouring out of his Spirit into the Hearts of Believers. The holy Spirit is in Scripture compared unto Wine; and therefore the Prophet calls us to buy Wine, as well as Milk, *that is*, the Spirit of Love, which fills and glads the Soul, as it were, with new Wine. The Apostle alludes to this, when he bids the *Ephesians* not to be drunk with Wine, *wherein is Excess, but be filled with the Spirit*. And our Lord shews us thus much by chusing Wine, to shew forth the Strength and Refreshment of his Blood in the blessed Sacrament. I know these Terms are unintelligible to natural Men; they can no more understand me than if I spake to them in an unknown Tongue; for they are only to be spiritually discerned: To you then that are spiritual do I speak; to you that are justified by Faith, and feel the blessed Spirit

Spirit of Jesus Christ working upon your Hearts; you can judge of what I say; you have already, I am persuaded, been, as it were, filled with new Wine, by the Inspiration of his holy Spirit. But alas, you have not yet had Half your Portion! These are only Earnests, and, in Comparison, but Shadows of good Things to come. Our Lord keeps his best Wine for you till the last; and, tho' you have drunk deep of it already, yet he intends to give you more: He will not leave you, till he has filled you to the Brim, till you are ready to cry out, Lord, stay thine Hand, thy poor Creatures can hold no more! Be not straitned in your own Bowels, since Jesus Christ is not straitned in his. Open your Hearts as wide as ever you will, the Spirit of the Lord shall fill them. Christ deals with true Believers as *Elijah* did with the poor Woman, whose Oyl increased to pay her Husband's Debts; as long as she brought Pitchers, the Oyl continued; it did not cease till she ceased bringing Vessels to contain it. My Brethren, our Hearts are like those Pitchers; open them freely by Faith, and the Oyl of God's free Gift, the Oyl of Gladness, the Love of God thro' Christ, shall be continually pouring in; for Believers are to be filled with all the Fulness of God.

Fourthly,

Fourthly, Our Lord's turning Water into Wine, and keeping the best until the last, may shew forth the Glory of the latter Days of his Marriage-Feast with his Church. Great Things God has done already, whereat Millions of Saints have rejoiced, and do yet rejoice. Great Things God is doing now, but yet, my Brethren, we shall see greater Things than these. It is meet, right, and our bounded Duty, to give Thanks unto God, even the Father; for many righteous Men have desired to see the Things which we see, and have not seen them; and to hear the Things which we hear, and have not heard them. But still there are more excellent Things behind; glorious Things are spoken of these Times, when the Earth shall be filled with the Knowledge of the Lord, as the Waters cover the Sea. There is a general Expectation among the People of God, when the Partition-Wall between Jew and Gentile shall be broken down, and all Israel be saved. Happy those who live when God does this. They shall see Satan, like Lightning, fall from Heaven. They shall not weep, as the Jews did at the building of the second Temple. No, they shall rejoice with exceeding great Joy; for all the former Glory of the Christian Church shall be nothing in Comparison of that Glory, which shall excel; then shall they

they cry out with the Governor of the Feast, *Lord, thou hast kept thy good Wine until now.*

Fifthly and lastly, This shews forth to us the Happiness of that blessed State, when we shall all sit together at the Marriage-Supper of the Lamb, and drink of the new Wine in his eternal and glorious Kingdom.

The Rewards which Jesus Christ confers on his faithful Servants, and the Comforts of his Love wherewith he comforts them, whilst Pilgrims here on Earth, are often so exceeding great, that, were it not so promised, it were almost Presumption for them to hope for any Reward hereafter; but, my Brethren, all the Manifestations of God that we can possibly be favoured with here, when compared with the Glory that is to be revealed in us, are no more than a Drop of Water, when compared with an unbounded Ocean. Tho' Christ frequently fills his Saints even to the Brim, yet their corruptible Bodies weigh down their Souls, and cause them to cry, *Who shall deliver us from these Bodies of Death?* These earthly Tabernacles can hold no more; but, blessed be God, these earthly Tabernacles are to be dissolved: This Corruptible is to put on Incorruption; this Mortal is to be put on Immortality; and when God shall cause all his Glory to pass before us, then shall

we cry out, *Lord, thou hast kept thy good Wine until now.* We have drunk deeply of thy Spirit; we have heard glorious Things spoken of this thy City, O God; but we now find not the Half, not one Thousandth Part hath been told us. Oh the invisible Realities of the World of Faith! *Eye hath not seen, Ear hath not heard, neither hath it entred into the Heart of the greatest Saint to conceive,* how *Christ* will shew forth his Glory there. *St. Paul*, who was carried up into the third Heavens, could give us little or no Account of it. And well he might not; for he heard and saw such Things as is not possible for a Man cloathed with Flesh and Blood to utter. Whilst I am thinking, and only speaking of those Things unto you, I am almost carried beyond myself. Methinks I now receive some little Fore-Tastes of that new Wine, which I hope to drink with you in the heavenly Kingdom for ever and ever.

And wherefore do you think I have been saying these Things? Many, perhaps, may be ready to say, To manifest thy own Vain-Glory. But it is a small Matter with me to be judged of Man's Judgment. He that judgeth me is the Lord. He knows that I have spoken of his Miracle, only for the same End for which he at first performed it, and which I at first proposed,
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that is, to shew forth his Glory, that you also may be brought to believe on him.

Did I come to preach myself, and not Christ Jesus my Lord, I would come to you, not in this Plainness of Speech, but with the enticing Words of Man's Wisdom. Did I desire to please natural Men, I need not preach here in the Wilderness. I hope my Heart aims at nothing else than what our Lord's great Fore-runner aimed at, and which ought to be the Business of every Gospel Minister, that is, to point out to you the God-Man Christ Jesus. *Behold then, by Faith behold, the Lamb of God, who taketh away the Sins of the World.* Look unto him and be saved. You have heard how he has manifested, and will yet manifest his Glory to true Believers; and why then, O Sinners, will you not believe in him? I say, O Sinners, for now I have spoken to the Saints; I have many Things to say to you and Oh! may God give you all an hearing Ear, and an obedient Heart!

My Lord, even the Lord Jesus, who shewed forth his Glory above 1700 Years ago, has made a Marriage-Feast, and offers to espouse all Sinners to himself, and to make them Flesh of his Flesh, and Bone of his Bone. He is willing to be united to you by one Spirit. In every Age, at fundry Times, and after divers Manners,

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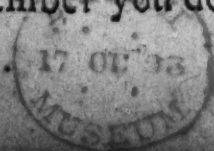
he hath sent forth his Servants, and they have bid many, but yet, my Brethren, there is Room. The Lord therefore now has given a Commission in these last Days to other of his Servants, even to compel poor Sinners, by the Cords of Love, to come in, for our Master's House must and shall be filled. He will not shed his precious Blood in vain. Come then, my Brethren, come to the Marriage. Do not play the Harlot any longer. Let this be the Day of your Espousals with Jesus Christ, he only is your lawful Husband, he is willing to receive you, tho' other Lords have had Dominion over you. Come then to the Marriage. Behold the Oxen and Fatlings are killed, and all Things are ready, let me hear you say, as *Rebecca* did, when they asked her, whether she would go and be a Wife to *Isaac*; Oh let me hear you say, We will come. Indeed you will not repent it. The Lord shall turn your Water into Wine. He shall fill your Souls with Marrow and Fatness, and cause you to praise him with joyful Lips. Do not say, you are miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, and therefore ashamed to come, for it is to such that this Invitation is now sent. The Polite, the Rich, the Busy, Self-righteous *Pharisees* of this Generation have been bidden already, but they have rejected the Counsel of God against themselves. They

are too deeply engaged in going, one to his Country House, another to his Merchandize. They are so deeply wedded to the Poms and Vanities of this wicked World, that they, as it were with one Consent, have made Excuse. And tho' they have been often called in their own Synagogues, yet all the Return they make is to thrust us out, and thereby in Effect say, they will not come. But God forbid, my Brethren, that you should learn of them; no, since our Lord condescends to call first, (because, if left to yourselves you would never call after him) let me beseech you to answer him, as he answered you, when called upon by infinite offended Justice to die for your Sins, that is, *Lo! I come to do thy will, O God!* What if you are miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, that is no Excuse; Faith is the only Wedding Garment Christ requires. He does not call you because you *are already*, but because he intends to *make you Saints*. No, it pities him to see you naked. He wants to cover you with Righteousness. In short, he desires to shew forth his Glory, that is, his free Love, thro' your Faith in him. Not but that he will be glorified, whether you believe in him or not; for the infinitely free Love of Jesus Christ will be ever the same, whether you believe it, and so receive it,

or

or not. But our Lord will not send out his Servants in vain, to call you always. The Time will come when he will say, None of those which were bidden, and would not come, shall taste of my Supper. Our Lord is a God of Justice, as well as a God of Love; and if Sinners will not take hold of his Golden Sceptre, verily he will bruise them with his Iron Rod. It is for your Sakes, O Sinners, and not his own, that he thus condescends to invite you. Oh suffer him to shew forth his Glory, even the Glory of the exceeding Riches of his free Grace, by believing on him, *For we are saved by Grace thro' Faith.* It was Grace, free Grace, that moved the Father so to love the World, as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting Life! It was Grace that made the Son to come down and die. It was Grace, free Grace, that moved the Holy Ghost to undertake to sanctify the elect People of God; and it was Grace, free Grace, that moved our Lord Jesus Christ to send forth his Ministers to call all poor Sinners this Day. Let me not then, my Brethren, go without my Errand. Why will you not believe in him? Will the Devil do such great and good Things for you as Christ will? No indeed, he will not. Perhaps he may give you to drink at first of a little
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brutish Pleasure. But what will he give you to drink at last? A Cup of Fury, and of trembling; a never-dying Worm; a self-condemning Conscience, and the bitter Pains of eternal Death. But as for the Servants of Jesus Christ, it is not so with them. No, he keeps his best Wine till the last. And tho' he may cause you to drink of the Brook in the Way to Heaven, and of the Cup of Affliction, yet he sweetens that with a Sense of his Goodness, and makes it pleasant to drink, such as their Souls do love. I appeal to the Experience of any Saint here present, (as I doubt not but there are many such in this Field) whether Christ has not proved faithful to his, ever since you have been espoused to him? Has he not shewed forth his Glory ever since you believed on him? And now, Sinners, what have you to object? I see you are all silent, and well you may. For if you will not be drawn with the Cords of infinite and everlasting Love, what will draw you? I could urge many Terrors of the Lord to perswade you; but if the Love of Jesus Christ will not constrain you, your Case is desperate. Remember this Day I have invited all, even the worst of Sinners, the most abandon'd Adulterers and Adulteresses, to be married to the Lord Jesus. If you perish, remember you do not perish for
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Lack of Invitation. You yourselves shall stand forth at the last Day; and I here give you a Summons to meet me at the Judgment Seat of Christ, and to clear both my Master and me. Would Weeping, would Tears prevail on you, I could with my Head Waters, and my Eyes Fountains of Tears, that I might weep out every Argument, and melt you into Love. Would any Thing I could do or suffer influence your Hearts, I think I could bear to pluck out my Eyes, or even to lay down my Life for your Sake. Or was I sure to prevail on you by Importunity, I could continue my Discourse till Midnight. I would wrestle with you even till the Morning-Watch, as *Jacob* did with the Angel, and would not go away till I had overcome. But such Power belongeth only unto the Lord; I can only invite; it is he only can work in you both to will and to do after his good Pleasure; it is his Property to take away the Heart of Stone, and give you a Heart of Flesh; it is his Spirit that must convince you of Unbelief, and of the everlasting Righteousness of his dear Son. 'Tis he alone must give Faith to apply his Righteousness to your Hearts. It is he alone can give you Wedding-Garment, and cause you to sit down and drink new Wine in his Kingdom. Whatever others may boast of Man's Free-Will,

Will, I know no Free-Will any one hath, except a Free-Will to do Evil continually. As to Spirituall we are quite dead, and have no more Power to turn to God of ourselves, than *Lazarus* had to raise himself, after he had lien stinking in the Grave four Days. If thou canst go, Oh Man, and breathe upon all the dry Bones that lye in the Graves, and bid them live; if thou canst take thy Mantle and divide yonder River, as *Elijah* did the River *Jordan*, then will we believe thou hast a Power to turn to God of thyself. But as thou must despair of the one, so thou must despair of the other, without Christ's preventing and quickening Grace. In him is thy only Help. Fly to him then by Faith. Say unto him, as the poor Leper did, *Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make us willing*; and he will stretch forth the Right-Hand of his Power to assist and relieve you: He will sweetly guide you by his Wisdom on Earth, and afterwards take you up to partake of his Glory in Heaven.

To his Mercy therefore and Almighty Protection, do I earnestly, humbly and most affectionately commit you. The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord lift up the Light of his blessed Countenance upon you, and give you all Peace and Joy in Believing, now and for evermore.

F I N I S.

